

Original citation:

Murray, Neil (2018) University gatekeeping tests : what are they really testing and what are the implications for EAP provision? JACET Journal, 62 . pp. 15-27.

Permanent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/104812>

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Copyright © JACET

A note on versions:

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

University Gatekeeping Tests: What are they Really Testing and What are the Implications for EAP Provision?

Neil Murray

Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, UK

Abstract

Higher education today is a global enterprise. In order to compete in this environment, a growing number of universities are offering programmes and courses delivered through the medium of English. These programmes promise to increase enrolment numbers and attract high-fee paying international students. However, if academic standards are to be maintained and all students to benefit maximally from their university experience, then English language entry standards need to be suitably rigorous. This article calls into question the suitability of high-currency gatekeeping tests such as IELTS and TOEFL in terms of their ability to prepare students adequately for the particular demands of their degree programmes. It goes on to consider the implications of this for the practice of post-enrolment language assessment (PELA) and the nature of in-sessional English language provision offered by universities.

Keywords: academic literacy, university gatekeeping tests, English language provision, embedding academic literacies, post-enrolment language assessment

Introduction

The globalisation of higher education has led to its marketization and to a neoliberal *modus operandi* as increased competition is forcing universities to be highly strategic as they seek to internationalise, spread their brands and academic reputations far and wide, and improve the student experience and levels of graduate employability in an effort to secure market share (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Naidoo, 2016; Peters and Olssen, 2005; Ramachandran, 2010). The growing importance of university league tables and the fact that they feature in almost every aspect of universities' thinking is testament to this trend and to the realisation by their senior management that failure to compete can mean failure to remain viable. The stakes are high indeed.

With the globalisation of higher education has come a far greater diversity of the student body – and indeed academic staff – than has hitherto been the case. Greater mobility is both a cause and consequence of globalisation and the fact that it is reflected in the student demographic is seen by many as a positive thing in that it reflects what Vertovec (2010) has referred to as the 'superdiversity' that increasingly characterises society in general, while providing a teaching-learning context that prepares students for living and working in that environment. Multicultural, multilingual classrooms can be exciting and dynamic environments with the potential to draw on experiences and realities that extend beyond those of local students and staff; so a business or engineering seminar, for example, can benefit from authentic examples taken from the Chinese or Indian contexts. This promotes greater student engagement and nurtures a sense of recognition and validation of their own lives and cultures.

The fact of greater student mobility and the opportunity this has presented for universities to grow their market share has meant that more and more universities are offering courses in the medium of English, the world's *lingua franca*. For those students who enrol on

such courses the benefits are many. They offer an opportunity to develop valuable English language and intercultural skills, along with associated qualities such as tolerance, understanding, and the ability to adapt, develop effective communication strategies, integrate, and work collaboratively (Montgomery, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2016; Sweeney, Weaven & Herington, 2008; Volet & Ang 1998). These skills and qualities are highly prized by employers an increasing number of whom operate in international contexts and with a workforce that is similarly diverse (Diamond et al., 2011; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012; British Council, 2013), and the premium they place on these skills can be reflected in the enhanced salaries they offer employees who come equipped with them. Universities are very much alive to this reality and what it means for their reputations and ability to recruit; for them, producing students who embody the kinds of graduate qualities employers most value is key to achieving high levels of graduate employability, with the attendant benefits around institutional ranking in league tables (Global University Employability Ranking, 2016 <https://ei.britishcouncil.org/news/news-alerts-which-universities-produce-most-work-ready-graduates>).

Furthermore, many students who wish to study in English medium institutions choose to do so in countries such as the UK and the US, where English is spoken as the native language – Kachru's (1985) so-called 'inner circle' countries. These countries boast a high proportion of the highest ranked universities in the world; consequently, a degree awarded by them, in combination with well-developed English language and intercultural skills, position overseas graduates very favourably in terms of their ability to secure the best paid, most prestigious jobs when they return to their countries of origin. In short, an English medium higher education can go a long way to ensuring a good quality of life and a rich life experience.

English Language Proficiency and the Question of Academic Standards

While the globalisation of higher education and the diverse classrooms it has promoted have brought the kinds of benefits illustrated above, it has not been without its challenges. Ironically perhaps, it is arguably two of its most recognised benefits – the opportunity to develop English language and intercultural skills – that are also the greatest threat to the experience and academic success of *all* students, not just native speakers. Students who are unable and/or unwilling to participate, due to insufficient levels of English language proficiency or cultural dispositions, affect the richness of both their own learning experience as well as that of others. This is particularly the case where lecturers feel that they have to tone down course content in order to make it comprehensible to all, and in group work, where the inability to contribute ideas means that the same people will tend to contribute most yet feel that they derive little benefit from the experience because this is not reciprocated (Popov et al, 2012; Turner, 2009; Volet & Ang, *ibid*). In both cases, the potential to learn is compromised both for those who are fluent in English and those who may be intellectually strong but weaker in English are thus unable to achieve to their potential. In essence, globalisation has led to a more competitive higher education environment that has the potential to lead to a compromise in educational standards if students are not required to meet sufficiently rigorous entry standards, particularly in relation to English language. There is, in other words, a tension between business imperatives and educational standards. The academic literature and media articles are replete with references to concerns over international students' English language skills and what this has meant for the delivery of programme curricula and thus academic standards; about how pressures to recruit and remain competitive have led some universities to accept students whose English falls below the standard required to successfully meet the demands of their studies. In reporting on a Times Higher Education poll, for example, Baty (2010) highlighted a number of key findings as follows:

- 84 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement: ‘The squeeze on resources for universities is “having an adverse effect on academic standards”.’ Half ‘strongly agreed’.
- The sector now takes thousands of overseas students who ‘place different pressures on standards with divergent learning cultures and, often, language problems’.
- Almost three quarters of respondents believed that their university has been forced to accept students who ‘are not capable of benefiting’ from university study.
- 48 per cent of academics agreed with the statement: ‘I have felt obliged to pass a student whose performance did not really merit a pass’. 42 per cent said ‘decisions to fail students’ work have been overruled at higher levels in the institution’.

Invoking evidence that emerged from the 2009 report *Students and Universities* and the then Select Committee on Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills, Alderman (2010) has similarly spoken of

... pressures to maximise non-governmental sources of income, primarily from "full fee-paying" non-European students, to whom it is deemed prudent by these same senior leaderships to award qualifications to which they are often not entitled, so as to ensure future "market share" (Alderman, in *The Guardian Online*, March 10 2010).

Furthermore, in its 2009 report, *Thematic Enquiries into Concerns about Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education in England*, the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) noted that

‘... specific challenges have been identified with regard to the admission of students with English-language skills that are either insufficient to deal with the demands of their programme of study or have the potential to have a detrimental effect on the learning experience of all students (UK Quality Assurance Agency 2009, p. 2).

The fact that students are entering universities yet struggling to cope with the demands of their studies suggests that either the gatekeeping tests typically employed by universities (e.g. IELTS and TOEFL) as a measure of linguistic suitability are being misused in that entry thresholds are being set too low, or that the tests are not really measuring what they need to be measuring or are only measuring part of what they need to be measuring. In order to consider what might be going wrong, it is helpful to consider a distinction made by Lea & Street (1998) between study skills and academic literacy.

The ‘Study Skills-Academic Literacy’ Distinction

Lea and Street see study skills as adopting a generic, one-size-fits-all approach to language in which ‘literacy is a set of itemised skills which students have to learn and which are then transferable to other contexts. The focus, they argue, is on attempts to ‘fix’ problems with student learning, which are treated as a kind of pathology. The theory of language on which it is based emphasises surface features, grammar and spelling’ (Lea and Street 1998: 158), and in this it contrasts with the academic literacies model which is more nuanced in that it

...sees the literacy demands of the curriculum as involving a variety of communicative practices, including genres, fields and disciplines. From the student

point of view a dominant feature of academic literacy practices is the requirement to switch practices between one setting and another, to deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices appropriate to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes (Lea and Street *ibid.*: 159).

In other words, the academic literacies model recognises that different disciplines have associated with them particular sets of literacy practices conversancy in which ‘qualifies’ the individual to become a member of their respective communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Lea and Street suggest, such conversancy goes beyond control of the surface features of language; it also requires the individual – the student in this case – to become socialised into their discipline through participating in its socially constituted traditions of meaning making and learning how to communicate in particular ways and to ‘be’ particular kinds of people: that is, to write (or indeed speak) ‘as academics’, ‘as geographers’, ‘as social scientists’ (Curry & Lillis 2003, p. 11). Only then can they claim competence in using language effectively and appropriately, and as bone fide members of their disciplinary communities. As Rex and McEachen note, those traditions

... include not just concepts and associated vocabulary, but also rhetorical structures, the patterns of action, that are part of any tradition of meaning-making. They include characteristic ways of reaching consensus and expressing disagreement, of formulating arguments, of providing evidence, as well as characteristic genres for organizing thought and conversational action. (Rex & McEachen 1999, p. 69).

Understanding these traditions as they exist in any given discipline requires an approach to language that goes beyond a generic set of language skills many of which, as Lea and Street note, are not transferable across different disciplines. It demands what is sometimes referred to as an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) approach rather than an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP). This is true both at the level of assessment (particularly where this serves a gatekeeping function) as well as that of course content; yet in both these areas the focus is almost invariably on EGAP. Tests such as IELTS and TOEFL do not – and do not claim to – assess test-takers’ conversancy in the particular academic literacies of their future disciplines, and this is likely why students who meet even more rigorous English language entry conditions will often still struggle subsequently with course work. And for those who succeed in meeting more modest English language entry conditions, they are likely to struggle even more to understand and develop the literacy practices they require, even where these are taught explicitly alongside their regular degree coursework. Unfortunately, the teaching of academic literacies as part of universities’ in-session language support remains all too rare and/or under-developed/under-resourced. EGAP continues to preponderate, a fact which may help explain why in-session classes tend to have high attrition rates (Lobo & Gurney, 2014): such classes are merely regurgitating information students have already had to learn in order to score sufficiently well on EGAP-focussed gatekeeping tests and thereby meet their receiving institutions’ English language entry conditions. Students are highly pragmatic and will not invest time in an activity from which they feel they are deriving little benefit, particularly when they may be under pressure from impending assignments, or indeed the demands of a busy social life! If, however, in-session provision is focused on providing them with the kinds of literacy practices that meet their immediate needs – whether in the form of assessed coursework or an upcoming clinical placement, for example – then they will likely feel far more motivated to attend.

I have argued elsewhere (Murray, 2016) that the need for discipline-based language instruction is an argument for its decentralisation; that is, rather than being located in a central unit, support is devolved to faculties, with a team of English language tutors assigned to and working directly with and within each faculty. The advantages of this arrangement are many and include:

- Emphasising the fundamental relationship between academic literacies and disciplines, while de-emphasising the misleading construction of academic literacy in terms of a set of general skills that will equip students to cope with the academic demands of their studies (see also Wingate, 2006).
- Enabling English language teachers to understand the local context and its expectations and requirements around such things as assessment methods, and to become experts in the discourses of the disciplines of the departments and faculties with which they are aligned, and therefore to better serve students by developing syllabi and materials that are better informed, relevant and thus engaging.
- Assisting English language teachers to forge productive relationships with academic staff in the faculties/departments where they are located. This, in turn, helps them understand departmental priorities and student needs as well as influence policy and decision-making in the interests of increasing their effectiveness.
- Providing a vehicle via which to highlight the value of what English language teachers do and the often considerable skill and experience underlying it. This has the potential to increase their influence within the institution and help improve their conditions of service, with possible implications for their level of commitment to what they do.

Embedding Academic Literacies in the Curriculum

One might argue that gatekeeping tests are not designed to *prepare* students linguistically for their studies but to provide an indication of whether they have sufficient proficiency to successfully navigate their way through their degree programmes and acquire the particular disciplinary literacies they need to perform optimally. Whether or not one endorses this position, the fact remains that such tests do not account for the full spectrum of language competence that students need post-enrolment and it seems unlikely that this will change anytime soon seeing as testing organisations and universities have invested too much in these tests. This being the case, students will need to acquire academic literacies during their degree courses. Because these literacies are fundamental to understanding and engaging with the discipline and the fact that the increasing diversity of the student body means that few assumptions can be made concerning the discipline knowledge they bring with them, it is essential that all students receive tuition in them; and the best way to ensure that this happens is to embed them within the curriculum (see, for example, Curnow & Liddicoat, 2008). While there are multiple models for embedding academic literacies in the curriculum, perhaps the ideal – if the most challenging to implement – is that which requires content lecturers themselves to educate students in the academic literacies of their disciplines; after all, they are the ones most conversant in them. This needs to be a collaborative effort, however, with English language tutors helping tease out literacies that academic staff may not necessarily be able to bring to consciousness and articulate, and helping to provide any professional development required to support academic staff in the teaching of them. While this may be a challenging and time-consuming exercise that will require a change of culture, provoke considerable pushback from certain quarters and thus require high-level institutional backing, I would suggest that it is difficult to take issue with its underlying rationale: If academic literacy is fundamental to the discipline, then the teaching of it should not be treated as a bolt-on activity

to be carried out by English language teaching staff who are not ‘insiders’ and fully socialised into the discipline in the way academic staff are. It needs to be imparted by the experts, staged, delivered and recycled at strategic points within the curriculum where it is most relevant. I have reported elsewhere on the process and challenges of implementing such a model (see. for example, Murray & Nallaya 2014, Murray 2016, op cit.).

Testing Student Proficiency Post-Entry

If all students are to be educated in the academic literacies of their disciplines as part of the degree programme curriculum, this raises the question of whether and why English language support units – a staple of most if not all universities – are needed. In fact, such units can and should play an important role, firstly in supporting academics’ efforts to impart to students the academic literacies relevant to their disciplines, and secondly to ensure that students have a sufficient level of general proficiency such that they can operate fully in social and academic contexts, both within and outside of university, as well as understand and engage with the academic literacy tuition they receive. While the fact of students struggling with English post-entry may in part be put down to a lack of understanding of the academic literacies of their discipline in the way I have described above, there are other reasons that may also account for the language challenges students face. These include:

- students studying to the test and benefiting from the co-called ‘practice effect’
- issues around the security of high stakes tests such as IELTS and TOEFL
- universities in some countries accepting multiple forms of evidence of language proficiency with no proven equivalence in most cases – Coley (2009) cites 61 different kinds of evidence used in Australia

- some students being categorised as domestic (despite being recent immigrants with modest language skills) and therefore not being required to provide evidence of language proficiency

Together, these vulnerabilities constitute an argument for some form of post-enrolment language assessment of students in order to ensure that they have a level of general proficiency that will enable them to function adequately. As we shall see, regardless of whether the test is simply or screening test or a more sophisticated diagnostic test, it can play an important role in determining which students should get access to which forms of support – an important consideration in light of the fact that universities typically fund only limited language support services that rarely meet the needs of all students who could potentially benefit from them. Post-enrolment assessment is a means via which to identify those in greatest need with a view to giving them priority access to limited resources, something we shall return to later.

There has been a good deal written in recent years about post-enrolment language assessment (PELA) (Murray, 2014; Ransom, 2009; Read & von Randow, 2013; Read, 2015; Elder & Knoch, 2009). One question frequently discussed is that of *who* should be assessed post-enrolment. Should assessment of all students for whom English is not a first language be compulsory, irrespective of their IELTS/TOEFL score? This is potentially contentious and problematic; contentious because university senior management are liable to be concerned about the way in which it positions their institution. That is, they may be concerned that a regime where assessment is mandatory might send out the message that their university accepts weak students with low English language proficiency levels requiring the institution, therefore, to test them again post entry with a view to providing the necessary support. Furthermore, mandatory assessment might be perceived by potential applicants as a further hurdle they will need to navigate and could, therefore, result in them opting to apply to a competitor institution instead in order to get an easier ride.

Mandatory assessment is problematic for other reasons: firstly, it sends out a confusing message to would-be students: ‘You have met the English language entry conditions we ourselves have stipulated, but we would like you to take a post-entry test of proficiency nonetheless in order to determine whether your language skills are sufficient and whether you would benefit from support’. Secondly, assessing all students presents logistical problems in terms of administering the test to large numbers of students – particularly if it is an electronic test that requires access to a workstation – and because it has the potential to raise security issues, especially if all students *are* assessed simultaneously. Furthermore, it can represent a huge marking load unless it is marked electronically; unfortunately, while software exists to do this, its ability to mark written work effectively has yet to be convincingly proven. One alternative to assessing all students is to assess only those who meet the university’s English language entry criteria but still fall below a pre-determined threshold, such as an IELTS 7.0 (or equivalent). Finally, mandatory assessment raises the thorny issue of how one secures compliance. As Ransom (2009) has indicated, it is difficult know how and on what basis to penalise students who refuse to undergo assessment, even where it is mandated.

Another question that has been addressed in the literature is *how* PELA should assess students’ proficiency, and here two options have tended to hold sway. One option is to use some form test, either a simple screening test or a diagnostic test that can inform test-takers of their weaknesses and be used by in-sessional English teachers to help direct the focus of their lessons. An alternative option is to use a piece of assessed coursework. This has the advantage of helping ensure that students perform to their full competence, as anything less has the potential to undermine their grade for the piece of work in question, and thus their grade point average.

One advantage of assessing students’ proficiency post-enrolment, which I alluded to earlier, lies in its ability to serve as a filtering mechanism that can be used to determine who

should get access to more resource-intensive forms of English language support. Typically, such support includes one or more of the following:

- One-to-one consultations with an English language tutor
- Feedback on coursework assignments
- A programme of courses, typically focusing on the four skills areas
- A cycle of workshops run throughout the academic year
- Online resources
- Credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing proficiency courses, as negotiated with individual departments
- Intensive general proficiency/academic literacy programmes run during teaching breaks

Of these forms of support, one-to-one consultations and the provision of written feedback on coursework assignments are the most resource-intensive. This being the case, PELA can be used to ensure that only those in greatest need as measured by performance on PELA are granted access to these forms of support, in addition to all other forms of support available to all students, with the exception of those credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses negotiated by individual faculties. Figure 1, below, is an adaptation of Murray and Hicks (2016) and illustrates the relationship between PELA and provision.

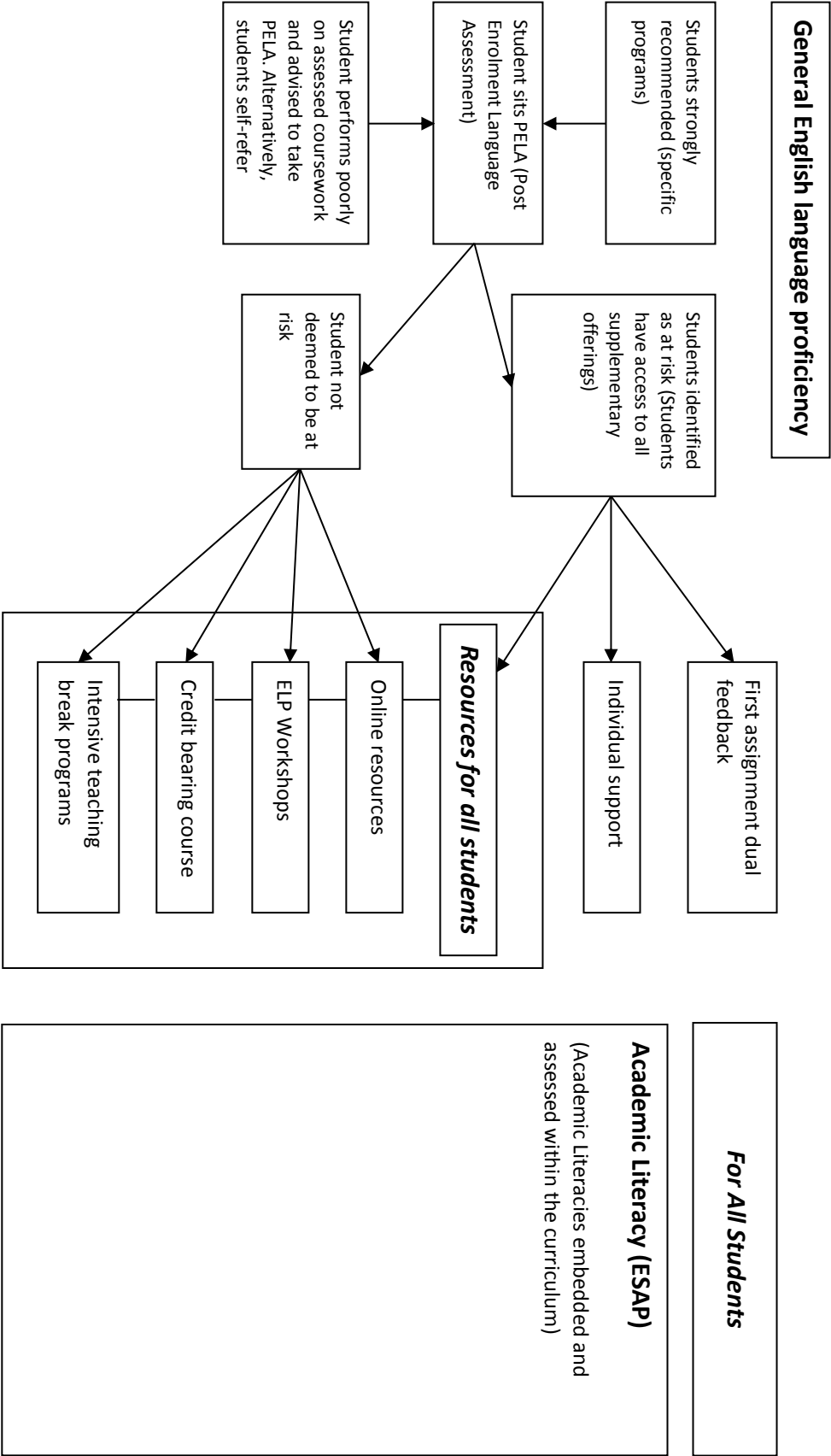


Figure 1: PELA as a means of accessing English language support

Conclusion

There have been numerous studies that have sought to measure the predictive validity of gatekeeping tests such as IELTS and TOEFL and their findings are highly variable (see, for example, Cotton & Conrow, 1998; Ingram & Bayliss, 2007; Kerstjens and Nery, 2000; Light, Xu & Mossop, 1987. What is clear, however, is that these tests do not measure comprehensively the kinds of language students need for their academic – and, subsequently, professional – work. They offer only a partial picture, focusing as they do on English for General Academic Purposes to the almost total exclusion of the kinds of discipline-specific literacies associated with English for Specific Academic Purposes. I have argued that this focus not only helps explain the common tendency for students to struggle to cope with the language demands of their studies post-enrolment, but also the tendency for EGAP-focused in-session courses to experience high levels of attrition. This lack of alignment between gatekeeping tests and students' needs vis-à-vis the language(s) of the different disciplines needs to be recognised by test users – in this case, universities, their admissions tutors, English language teachers, and those responsible for setting English language entry requirements. That is, there needs to be some effort invested in improving levels of assessment literacy among key stakeholders. It seems unlikely that without significant investment, along with calls for and buy-in from the higher education sector, testing organisations such as IELTS and ETS will develop a suite of discipline-focused English language tests. Nor does it seem particularly sensible that they should do so given that (a) I have argued that academic literacies need to be embedded in the curriculum and taught by content lecturers (with the support of English language and academic developers) on the grounds that they are fundamental to the discipline, and (b) arguably, such gatekeeping tests, despite being a somewhat blunt instrument, do nevertheless provide a useful indication of students' general academic proficiency and their facility with what Cummins

(1979, 1980) referred to Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Perhaps, then, the solution is to embed academic literacies in the curriculum while also increasing IELTS entry requirements slightly as this will help enable students to integrate both socially and academically, to more easily induce the academic literacies of their disciplines through simple exposure, and to better understand what is imparted to them directly via academic literacy tuition delivered within the curriculum.

References

- Alderman, G. (2010). Why university standards have fallen. *The Guardian*, Wednesday 10th March 2010. Retrieved March 20, 2014, from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/mar/10/universities-standards-blair-target>
- Baty, P. (2004). Caught in vicious cycle of declining standards. *The Times Higher Education*, November 19th, 2004. Retrieved March 27, 2017, from <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/caught-in-vicious-cycle-of-declining-standards/192504.article>
- British Council. (2013). *Culture Means Business. How International Cultural Relationships Contribute to Increased Trade and Competitiveness for the UK*. Accessed March 25, 2017. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/culture-means-business-report.pdf>.
- Coley, M. (1999). The English language entry requirements of Australian universities for students of non-English speaking background. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 18(1), 7–17.

- Cotton, F. & Conrow, F. (1998). An Investigation of the Predictive Validity of IELTS amongst a Group of International Students studying at the University of Tasmania', *IELTS Research Reports 1998*, Vol. 1, pp. 72–115.
- Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, 19, 121–129.
- Cummins, J. (1980). The construct of language proficiency in bilingual education. In J.E. Alatis (ed.), *Current issues in bilingual education. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (GURT) 1980* (pp. 81–103). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Curnow, T. J., & Liddicoat, A.J. (2008). Assessment as learning: Engaging students in academic literacy in their first semester. In *Proceedings of the ATN assessment conference 2008: Engaging students in assessment*, eds. A. Duff, D. Quinn, M. Green, K. Andre, T. Ferris and S. Copland [Online]. Available from: <http://www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/index.php/atna/issue/view/ISBN%20978-0-646-504421/showToc> (accessed March 26, 2017).
- Curry, M.J., & Lillis, T.M. (2003). Issues in academic writing in higher education. In C. Coffin, M.J. Curry, S. Goodmann, A. Hewings, T. Lillis and J. Swann (eds.), *Teaching academic writing: A toolkit for higher education*, 1–18. London: Routledge.
- Diamond, A., Walkley, L., Forbes, P., Hughes, T., & Sheen, J. (2011). *Global graduates. Global graduates into global leaders*. Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), the Council for Industry and Higher Education (now NCUB) and CFE Research and Consulting. Accessed March 25, 2017. <http://www.ncub.co.uk/reports/global-graduates-into-global-leaders.html>

The Economist Intelligence Unit. (2012). *Competing across borders. How cultural and communication barriers affect business*. Accessed March 19, 2017.

<http://www.economistinsights.com/countries-trade-investment/analysis/competing-across-borders>

Elder, C., & Knoch, U. (2009). *Report on the development and trial of the Academic English Screening Test (AEST)*. Melbourne: The University of Melbourne.

Ingram, D. E., & Bayliss, A. (2007). IELTS as a predictor of academic language performance. Part 1: The view from participants. *IELTS Impact Studies Vol. 7* (IELTS Joint-funded research programme). IELTS Australia & the British Council.

Kachru, B.B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle, in *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures*, ed. R. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson, 11–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kerstjens, M., & Nery, C. (2000). Predictive validity in the IELTS test: A study of the relationship between IELTS scores and students' subsequent academic performance. *English Language Testing System research reports*, 3, 85–108.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: an academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 157–172.

Light, R.L., Xu, M., & Mossop, J. (1987). English proficiency and academic performance of international students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(2), 251–61.

Lobo, A., & Gurney, L. (2014). What did they expect? Exploring a link between students' expectations, attendance and attrition on English language enhancement courses. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 38(5), 730–754.

- Montgomery, C. (2009). A Decade of Internationalisation. Has it Influenced Students' Views of Cross-Cultural Group Work at University? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 256–270.
- Murray, N. (2014). Reflections on the implementation of post-enrolment English language assessment. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 11(3), 325–337.
- Murray, N. (2016). An academic literacies argument for decentralizing EAP provision. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 70(4), 435–443.
- Murray, N., & Hicks, M. (2016). An institutional approach to English language proficiency. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 40(2), 170–187.
- Murray, N., & Nallaya, S. (2016). Embedding academic literacies in university programme curricula: a case study. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(7), 1296–1312.
- Naidoo, R., & Jamieson, I. (2005) Empowering Participants or Corroding Learning? Towards a Research Agenda on the Impact of Students Consumerism in Higher Education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), 267–281.
- Naidoo, R. (2016) The competition fetish in higher education: varieties. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(1), 1–10.
- Olssen, M., & Peters, A. (2005) Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), 313–345.
- Popov, V., Brinkman, D., Biemans, H.J.A., Mulder, M., Kuznetsove, A., & Noroozi, O. (2012). Multicultural Student Group Work in Higher Education. An Explorative Case Study on Challenges as Perceived by Students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36(2): 302–317.
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), (2009). *Thematic enquiries into*

concerns about academic quality and standards in higher education in England.

Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Accessed March 9, 2013, from www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/.../Documents/FinalReportApril09.pdf

Ramachandran, N.T. (2010) Marketing Framework in higher education: addressing aspirations of students beyond conventional tenets of selling products. *International Journal of Education Management*, 24(6), 544–556.

Rex, L. A., & McEachen, D. (1999). If anything is odd, inappropriate, confusing, or boring, it's probably important: The emergence of inclusive academic literacy through English classroom discussion practices. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 24, 65–129.

Ransom, L. (2009). Implementing the post-entry English language assessment policy at the University of Melbourne: Rationale, processes and outcomes. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 3(2), A13–A25.

Read, J. (2015). Issues in post-entry language assessment in English-medium universities. *Language Teaching*, 48(2), 217–234.

Read, J., & von Randow, J. (2013). A university post-entry English language assessment: Charting the changes. *English Language Studies*, 13(2), 89–110.

Spencer-Oatey, H., & Dauber, D. (2016). The gains and pains of mixed national group work at university. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2015.1134549>

Sweeney, A., Weaven, S., & Herington, C. (2008). Multicultural Influences on Group Learning: A Qualitative Higher Education Study. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(2), 119–132.

Turner, Y. (2009). 'Knowing Me, Knowing You,' is There Nothing We Can Do? Pedagogic Challenges in Using Group Work to Create an Intercultural Learning Space'. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 240–255.

- Vertovec, S. (2010). *Towards post-multiculturalism: Changing communities, conditions and contexts of diversity*. UNESCO.
- Volet, S. E., & Ang, G. (1998). Culturally Mixed Groups on International Campuses: An Opportunity for Inter-cultural Learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 17(1), 5–23.
- Wingate, U. (2006). Doing away with ‘study skills’. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(4), 457–469.